

Survey Report

School Walk Route Plan Inventory Survey to School Districts

2015

Washington State Department of Transportation

Local Programs Division

June 30, 2015

School Walk Route Plan Inventory Survey to School Districts

Executive Summary

Purpose

The intent of the *School Walk Route Plan Inventory Survey* is to inform policies and programs for improving pedestrian and bicycle safety for students. The survey tracks the number of school districts with walk route plans available for at least some of their schools. It also seeks to understand whether school districts have shared available school walk route plans with their respective local agencies.

Methodology

WSDOT has conducted the *School Walk Route Plan Inventory Survey* every two years since 2009. All school district superintendents were asked to participate in the survey. For the 2015 survey, WSDOT developed and used an online survey tool to assist school districts in completing the survey.

Response Rates

- Over 75 percent of school districts participated in the 2015 survey with 223 of 295 school districts responding.
- In order to understand the walk route planning needs of different sized school districts, the 2015 survey sought to ensure a relatively even sample of school districts based on their size. For all six school district size cohorts, a majority of school districts responded to the survey with rates ranging from 87 percent for the largest school districts to 61 percent for the smallest districts.
- For 2015, WSDOT was able to reduce the number of school districts that have never responded to the survey from 36 to 13, comparing 2013 and 2015 data.

2015 Survey Results

- Of the 223 responding school districts in 2015, 146 (65 percent of respondents) said they had walk route plans for at least some of their schools, while 77 (35 percent of respondents) said they did not have school walk route plans available for at least some of their schools.
- With responses broken out by school district size, the following pattern emerges: the larger the school district, the more likely it will have walk route plans available. For responding school districts with 10,000 or more students, 96 percent reported that they have walk route plans available. This percentage gradually declines for each successive size cohort, ending with schools districts with under-200 students reporting that only 37 percent have walk route plans available.
- Seventy-two school districts did not respond to the survey in 2015. Comparing 2015 survey results with the combined survey results from 2009-2015, it appears that school districts with walk route plans were more likely to respond to the survey in 2015, than

those who did not. This may have overstated the percentage of school districts with walk route plans.

2009-2015 Combined Survey Results

- The combined survey results show that approximately 58 percent of school districts have walk route plans, while 37 percent do not. The number of school districts with walk route plans available is about 7 percentage points less than was reported for the 2015 survey (65 percent).
- Looking at the largest school districts with 1000 students or more, these districts account for 48 percent of total school districts statewide, but represent 90 percent of all K-12 students. Over 77 percent of these school districts have walk route plans available to at least some of their schools.
- Using the 145 school districts that responded to the 2009 survey as a baseline, we see a 20 percent increase in the number of schools that now have walk route plans between 2009 and 2015. In 2009, 46 percent of these 145 school districts said they had walk route plans available. For the 2015 survey, 65 percent (94) of these tracked school districts now have school walk route plans.

Coordination between School Districts and Local Agencies

- Of the responding school districts with walk route plans reported for the 2015 survey, 55 percent said they had shared this information with their respective local agencies, while 11 percent said they have not shared this information. A relatively large portion of respondents either did not know if the plans were shared with local agencies (14 percent), or chose not to answer the question (21 percent).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Additional outreach and coordination is needed to ensure that walk and bike route planning efforts are reaching the most students statewide. This includes improving partnerships in communities. School districts and local agencies are responsible for ensuring the safety of students getting to and from school, including for students who choose to walk or bike. Based on the survey results, the following should be considered:

- Walk route planning outreach and technical assistance should target the largest school districts first. Thirty two school districts with 1,000 students or more either do not have walk route plans available or have never responded to the survey. These large school districts represent 90 percent of K-12 students statewide, and are more likely to have students who walk and bike to school.
- Coordination and partnerships between school districts and local agencies need to be strengthened. To help further this, additional outreach and education about the walk route planning process should be included as part of local agency transportation planning and engineering forums and school district student transportation forums.

School Walk Route Plan Inventory Survey to School Districts

Purpose

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) conducted the *School Walk Route Plan Inventory Survey* to help inform policies and programs for improving pedestrian and bicycle safety for students. The survey tracks the number of school districts with walk route plans available for at least some of their schools. It also seeks to understand whether school districts have shared available school walk route plans with their respective local agencies.

According to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), 392-151-025, each elementary school that has students who walk to and from school must develop a suggested walk route plan. A school walk route plan is typically a map or written document to inform parents and students about walking routes within a one-mile walking distance of the school and a plan to make safety improvements as needed. The responsibility for doing so is placed on the school district administration.

Methodology

WSDOT has conducted the *School Walk Route Plan Inventory Survey* every two years since 2009. The 2015 survey was designed to be completed quickly while capturing high level data about school walk route planning. WSDOT and OSPI developed questions for the 2015 survey based on feedback from past surveys. See Appendix A for the complete survey text.

Specifically, the survey sought to capture data in two primary areas:

- Availability of walk route plans for any schools in the district.
- Level of coordination between school districts and local agencies in school walk route planning.

The survey also allowed for the collection of existing walk route plans to be included as part of WSDOT's inventory of plans. The survey was conducted starting on March 5, 2015 and ending May 5, 2015.

Notification to School Districts

All school district superintendents were asked to participate in the survey. WSDOT used the following notification process to inform school districts of the survey:

1. Initial email notice to all School District Superintendents.
2. Reminder email to all School District Superintendents who did not respond to the first request, two weeks after the first email.
3. Personalized follow-up email to each School District Superintendent who did not respond to the prior two requests. This email included a cc to the district's student transportation lead staff, and the Superintendent's executive or administrative assistant (if known). The personalized emails were sent out beginning two weeks after the reminder email.
4. Follow-up phone calls to Superintendents who did not respond to the three prior requests. This additional outreach can be more time intensive, so prioritization for outreach was undertaken based on the following: 1) School districts that have never responded to the survey in the order of school district size; 2) School districts that did not respond to the survey in 2013 and where maps were not publically available on their websites, in student handbooks, or other media, again in order of school district size.

Online Walk Route Survey Application

For the 2015 survey, WSDOT developed an online survey tool to assist school districts in completing the survey (see Appendix B). The online database also streamlined management of the survey data. Previous survey cycles relied on school districts submitting surveys via email or phone which required staff to manually enter the data. In 2015, over 80 percent of school districts responding to the survey used the online survey tool (182 of 223 responding school districts).

Response Rates

Over 75 percent of school districts participated in the 2015 survey with 223 of 295 school districts responding. This was the highest response in the history of the survey, and a 35 percent increase in survey responses compared to 2013. Increased participation may be due to the creation of the easy to use online survey tool and the enhanced outreach process used for the 2015 survey. Figure 1 shows the response rate of school districts for all walk route surveys between 2009 and 2015.

Response Rates by School

District Size

In order to understand the walk route planning needs of different sized school districts, the 2015 survey sought to ensure a relatively even sample of school districts based on their size.

School districts were grouped in different cohorts based on the

number of enrolled students: school districts with 1) 10,000 or more students; 2) 5,000-9,999 students; 3) 1,000-4,999 students; 4) 500-999 students; 5) 200-499 students; and 6) school districts with under 200 students. In all cohorts, a majority of school districts responded to the survey (see Figure 2). Each of the three largest school district groups saw response rates of over 80 percent; these districts account for over 90 percent of K-12 students statewide. Over 70 percent of school districts responded to the survey in the two cohorts with the number of enrolled students ranging from 200 and 999. Sixty-one percent of school districts with under-200 students responded to the survey.

Figure 1: Survey Response Rates, 2009-2015

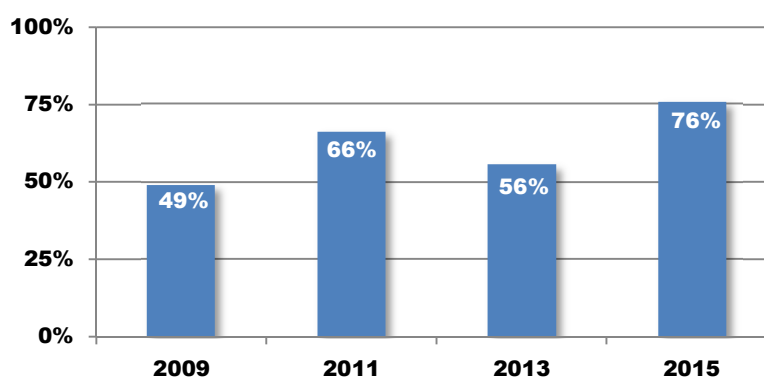
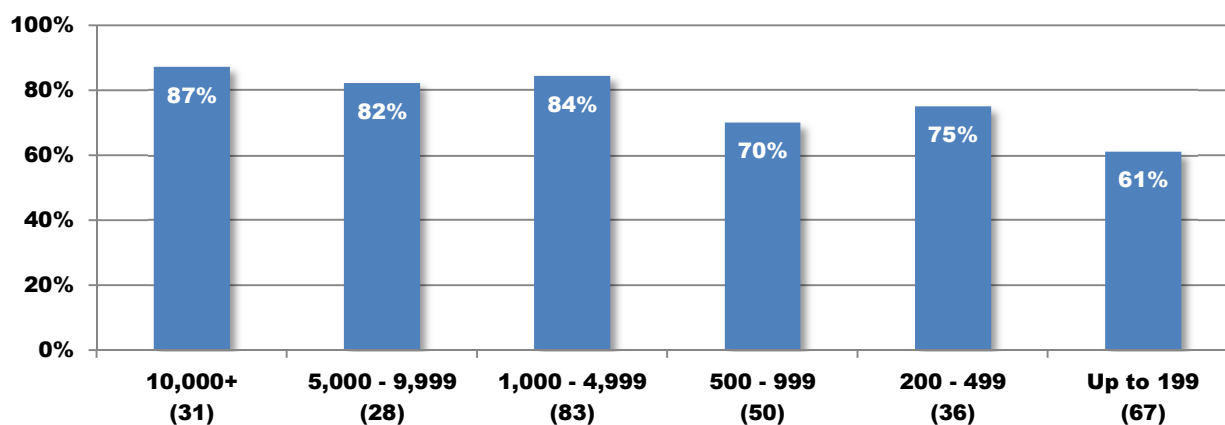


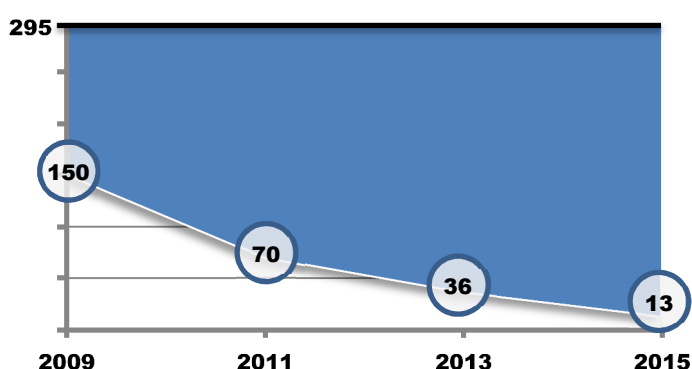
Figure 2: Survey Response Rates by School District Size, 2015



School Districts That Have Never Responded to the Survey

The 2015 survey saw a continued reduction in the number of school districts that have never responded to the survey. These school districts were prioritized for additional outreach this survey cycle. For 2015, WSDOT was able to reduce the number of school districts that have never responded to the survey from 36 to 13, comparing 2013 and 2015 data. Each survey cycle has reduced the number of school districts who have never responded to the survey by half each successive survey, as illustrated in Figure 3.

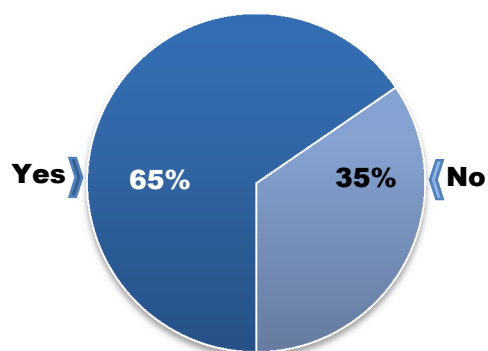
Figure 3: School Districts That Have Never Responded to the Survey, 2009-2015



2015 Survey Results

Of the 223 responding school districts in 2015, 146 (65 percent of respondents) said they had walk route plans for at least some of their schools, while 77 (35 percent of respondents) said they did not have school walk route plans available (Figure 4). Looking at 2015 results with

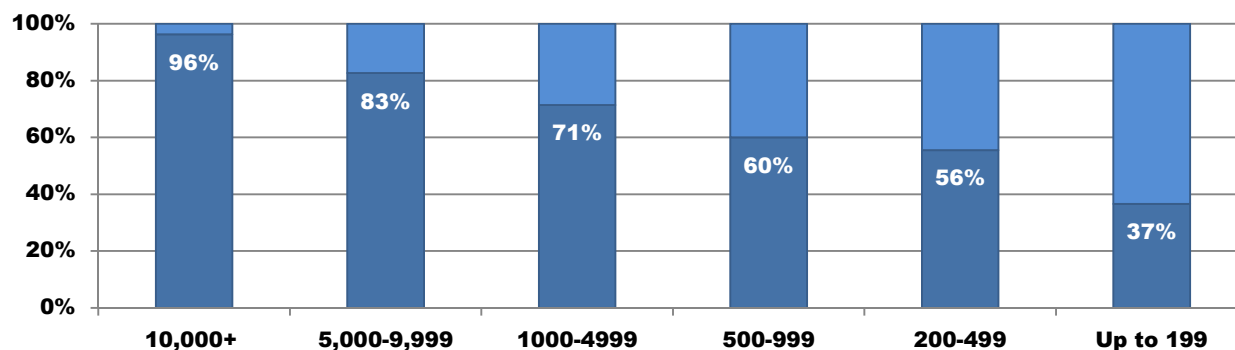
Figure 4: Percentage of Responding School Districts with Walk Route Plans
2015 Survey Results



responses broken out by school district size, a pattern emerges: larger school districts are more likely to have walk route plans available to at least some of their schools (Figure 5). For responding school districts with 10,000 or more students, 96 percent reported that they have walk route plans available. This percentage gradually declines for each successive size cohort, ending with school districts with under-200 students reporting that only 37 percent have walk route plans available.

Figure 5: Percentage of Responding School Districts with Walk Route Plans

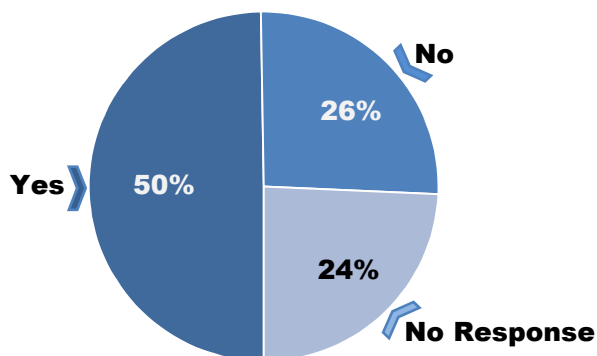
By School District Size, 2015 Survey Results



One difficulty in interpreting the data above is that 72 school districts did not respond to the survey in 2015. This amounts to about a quarter of school districts statewide. When looking at the survey responses as a percentage of all school districts, this becomes clear—of the 295 total school districts, 50 percent reported they have walk route plans available, 26 percent said they do not have walk route plans, while 24 percent did not respond to the survey (Figure 6).

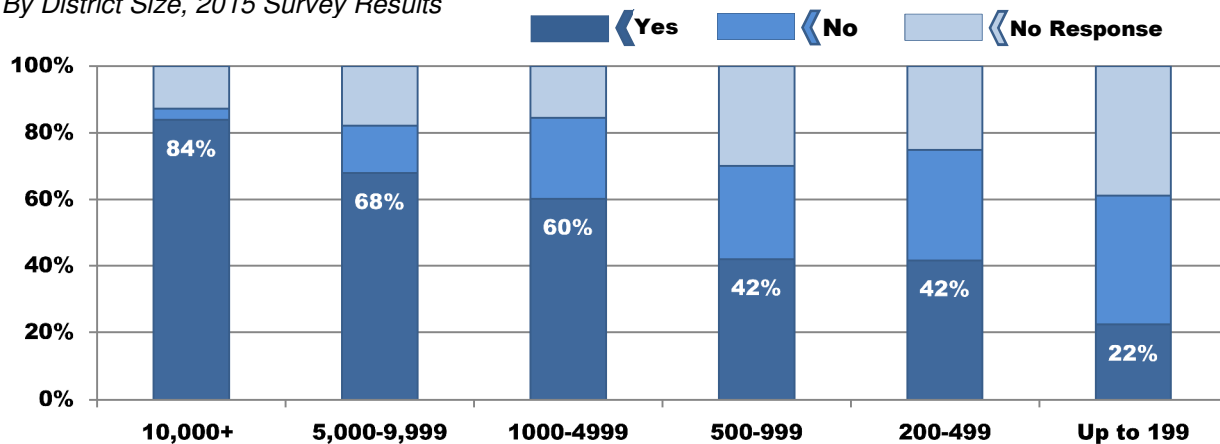
Figure 6: School Districts with Walk Route Plans as a Percentage of All School Districts

2015 Survey Results



The number of non-responding school districts makes it difficult to estimate accurately, the number of schools that do or do not have walk route plans available. However, when looking at the survey responses in relation to all school districts in each size cohort, a similar pattern to that reported above is seen-- the larger the school district size, the more likely it has walk route plans available (Figure 7).

Figure 7: School Districts with Walk Route Plans as a Percentage of All Districts
By District Size, 2015 Survey Results

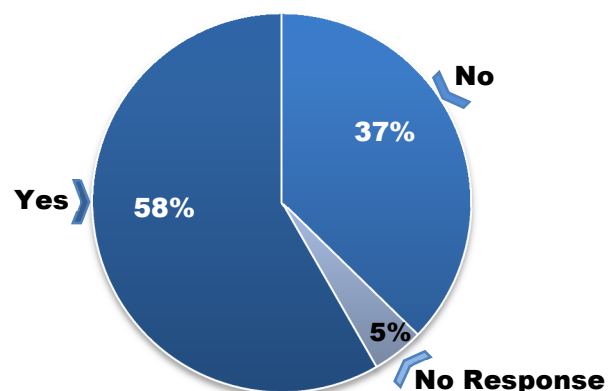


2009-2015 Combined Survey Data

Combined survey data from 2009 to 2015 provide a more complete picture of how many school districts have school walk route plans available. In all, data for 57 school districts were determined by pre-2015 survey responses.

Data was not available for the 13 school districts that have not participated in the survey. The combined survey results show that approximately 58 percent of school districts have walk route plans, while 37 percent do not. The number of school districts with walk route plans available is about 7 percentage points less than was reported for the 2015 survey (65 percent). One possibility for this difference is that school districts that have walk route plans were more likely to respond to the 2015 survey than those who do not.

Figure 8: Percentage of School Districts with Walk Route Plans
2009-2015 Combined Survey Results



It is also important to understand how many students have access to school walk route plans. When looking at the combined survey data broken-out by school district size, we see the similar pattern as we did with the 2015 survey results—the larger the school district, the more likely it will have walk route plans. School districts with 10,000 or more students account for 56 percent of all K-12 students (595,407 of 1,054,854); 94 percent of these districts have walk route plans

available. School districts with 5,000 students or more represent over 75 percent of all K-12 students in Washington State (the two largest school district cohorts combined in Figures 9 and 10 below); 86 percent of these school districts have walk route plans

School Districts with Walk Route Plans Available
Of 295 Total School Districts

	Yes	No	No Response
2015	146	77	72
2015 %	49%	26%	24%
2009-15*	168	114	13
2009-15 %	57%	39%	4%

*Data for 57 school districts determined by pre-2015 survey responses (22, Yes; 35 No). Thirteen school districts have never responded to the survey between 2009 and 2015.

available. Seventy-one percent of school districts with between 1,000 and 5,000 students have walk route plans available. For school districts with 500 to 1000 students, a majority of these districts have walk route plans (54 percent), while half of school districts with between 200 and 500 students have plans. For the smallest school districts with under-200 students only 25 percent have walk route plans available.

Figure 9: Number of K-12 Students Statewide by School District Size
Of 1,054,854 Total Students for the 2013-14 School Year; In Thousands

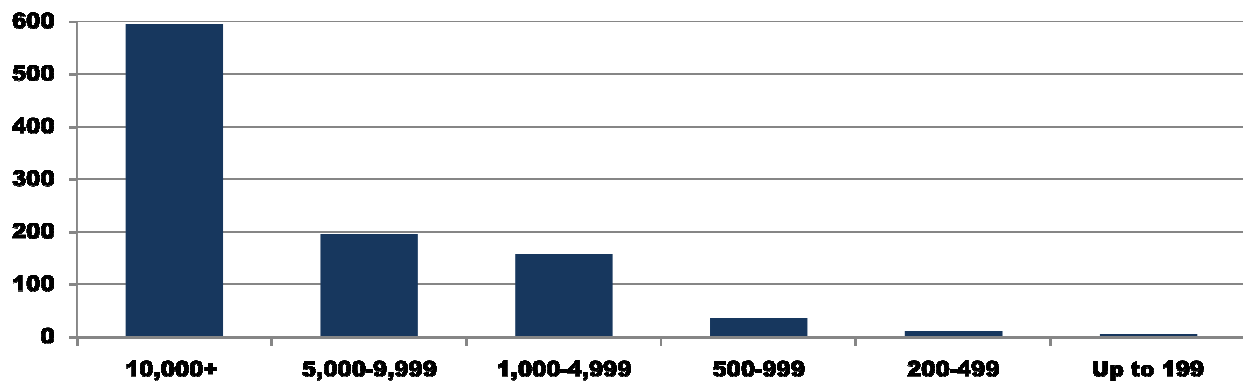
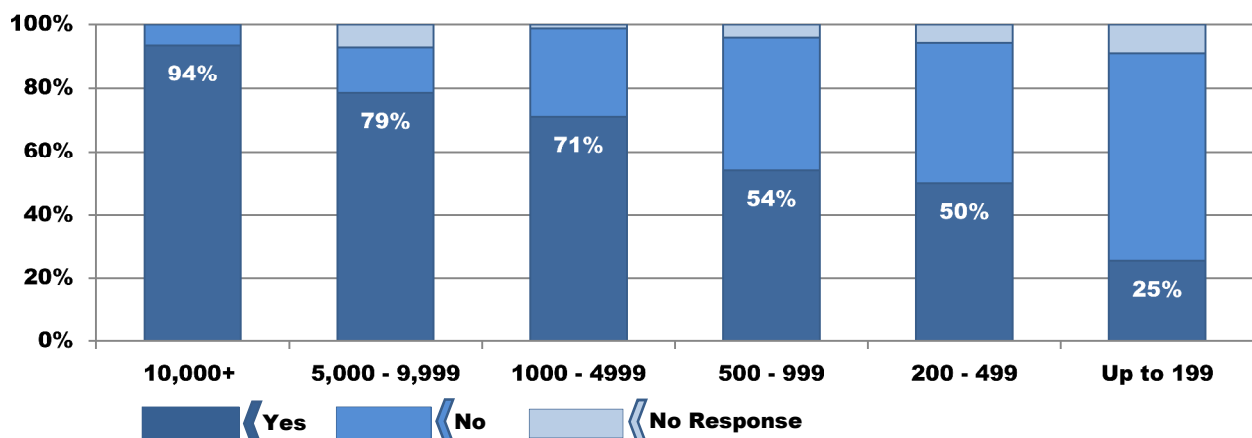


Figure 10: Percentage of School Districts with Walk Route Plans
By School District Size; 2009-2015 Combined Survey Results

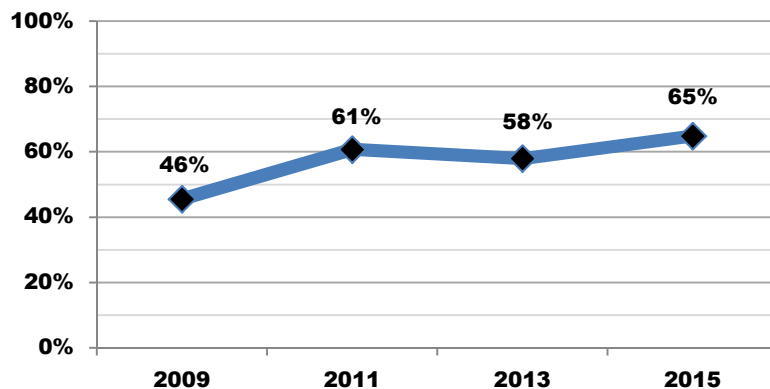


Trends Related to Walk Route Planning

With data available for the four surveys conducted between 2009 and 2015, we are better able to determine if more school districts are planning for safe walk routes. To evaluate whether or not we are seeing an increase in the number of school districts who have walk route plans, we used the 2009 survey results as a baseline. In 2009, 145 school districts responded to the survey. Of these school districts, 46 percent (66 districts) said they had walk route plans as of 2009. Successive surveys have seen a gradual increase in the number of these 145 school districts who have walk route plans as shown in Figure 11. For the 2015 survey, 65 percent (94) of these tracked school districts now have school walk route plans, a 20 percent increase compared to 2009.

Figure 11: Percent of Selected School Districts with Walk Route Plans, 2009-2015

Tracked Data for the 145 School Districts That Responded to the 2009 Survey

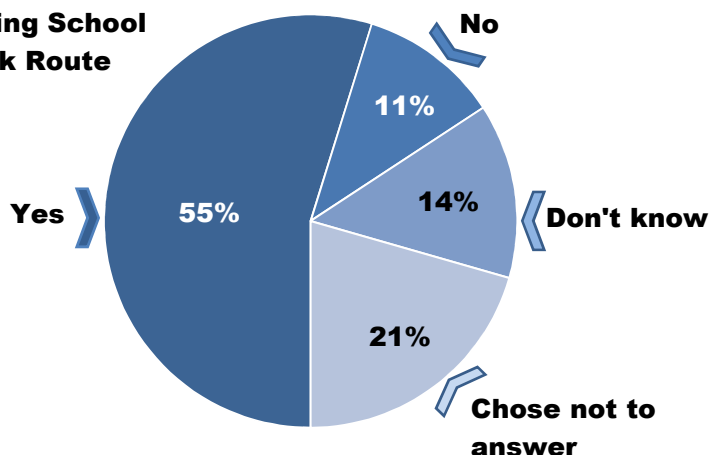


Walk Route Planning Coordination between School Districts and Local Agencies

The 2015 survey asked school districts whether or not they have shared their walk route plans with local agencies. Of the responding school districts with walk route plans, 55 percent said they had shared this information with their respective local agencies, while 11 percent said they have not shared this information. A relatively large portion of respondents either did not know if the plans were shared with local agencies (14 percent), or chose not to answer the question (21 percent). This data provides an adequate baseline for future studies. Although we have some confidence that a majority of schools with walk route plans have shared their plans with local agencies based on this sample, it is difficult to accurately determine the exact proportion based

on one year of data. Additional data will be needed to expand the sample and begin to understand any trends.

Figure 12: Percent of Responding School Districts that have Shared Walk Route Plans with Local Agencies
2015 Survey Responses



Conclusions and Recommendations

Although we now have confidence that a majority of school district now have walk route plans available, additional outreach and coordination are needed to ensure that walk and bike route planning efforts are reaching the most students statewide. This includes improving partnerships in communities. School districts and local agencies are responsible for ensuring the safety of students getting to and from school, including for students who choose to walk or bike. Based on the survey results, the following should be considered:

- Walk route planning outreach and technical assistance should target the largest school districts first. Thirty two school districts with 1,000 students or more either do not have walk route plans available or have never responded to the survey. These large school districts represent 90 percent of K-12 students statewide and are more likely to have students who walk and bike to school.
- Coordination and partnerships between school districts and local agencies need to be strengthened. To help further this, additional outreach and education about the walk route planning process should be included as part of local agency transportation planning and engineering forums and school district student transportation forums.

Resources:

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

School District Contact Information:

Superintendent Contacts: <https://eds.ospi.k12.wa.us/DirectoryEDS.aspx>

Washington State Student Transportation Directory-- Includes Student Transportation contacts for each school district:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Transportation/pubdocs/TransportationDirectory.pdf>

School District Data:

Student and Demographic Data: <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/DataDownload.aspx>

Appendix A: Survey Text and Questions

Washington State Inventory of School Walk Route Plans and Maps School Administrator's Survey

Thank you for participating in the Biennial Washington State Inventory of School Walk Route Plans conducted by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Safe Routes to School Program. Please provide answers to the following six questions below concerning *walk route plans* and *walk areas* as defined by [RCW 28A.160.160\(5\)](#) and [WAC 392-151-025](#). Walk route plans are typically maps that provide information about recommended school walk routes in the walk area, the one-road mile area around each school. Most of the school walk route plans/maps previously provided to WSDOT are available on [WSDOT's School Walk Route Plans in Washington website](#).

1) Which school district do you represent?

School District Name: _____

2) Do your elementary schools have current walk route plans for the school walk area?

___ Yes, all of our elementary schools have walk route plans.

___ Yes, some of our elementary schools have walk route plans.

Please list schools: _____

___ No, our elementary schools do not have walk route plans.

3) If yes, can you provide a copy of the Walk Route plans to WSDOT (please include plans/maps for middle or high schools if you have them)? (check one)

___ a) N/A the most current version is on the WSDOT website.

___ b) Yes, they are on the school/school district website
at: _____

___ c) Yes, I have uploaded copies. [Click here to upload the school district's walk route map\(s\)](#).

___ d) Yes, I will e-mail copies to SpilkeE@wsdot.wa.gov.

___ e) Yes, I will fax copies to you. Please Fax to: (360) 705-6822

___ f) Yes, I will mail copies to you.

If mailing, please send to:

Safe Routes to School Program
WSDOT Local Programs
PO Box 47390
Olympia, WA 98504-7390

____g) Other, please explain _____

4) When did you last update your school walk route plan? _____

5) Do you share the information about the school walk route plan with your city/county for inclusion in their capital planning efforts to improve conditions for children walking to school?

____ Yes

____ No

____ Don't Know

6) Who is the school district's primary contact for school walk route planning?:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Please provide your contact information:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____


To request help updating or creating a school walk route plan(s) complete and return the [WSDOT School Walk Route Planning Assistance Form](#)? Technical assistance resources

are limited and will be targeted to schools and school districts with the highest need. More information about school walk route planning is available in the [School Walk and Bike Routes: A Guide for Planning and Improving Walk and Bike to School Options for Students](#).

For questions about the survey please contact:

Ed Spilker
WSDOT Local Programs
(360) 705-7387
SpilkeE@wsdot.wa.gov

Appendix B: Online Walk Route Survey Tool (Screen Shot)

 Washington State
Department of Transportation

SUBMITCANCEL

Washington State Inventory of School Walk Route Plans and Maps School Administrator's Survey

Thank you for participating in the biennial Washington State Inventory of School Walk Route Plans conducted by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Safe Routes to School Program. Please provide answers to the following six questions below concerning walk route plans and walk areas as defined in RCW 28A.160.160(5) and WAC 392-151-025. Walk route plans are typically maps that provide information about recommended school walk routes in the walk area, the one-road mile area around each school. Most of the school walk route plans/maps previously provided to WSDOT are available at:
[WSDOT's School Walk Route Plans in Washington.](#)

1) What school district do you represent?
School District Name:

2) Do your elementary schools have current walk route plans for the school walk area?

☐ Yes, all of our elementary schools have walk route plans.
☐ Yes, some of our elementary schools have walk route plans. Please list schools below:
☐ No, our elementary schools do not have walk route plans.
☐ Other, please explain.

3) If yes, can you provide a copy of the Walk Route plans to WSDOT (please include plans/maps for middle or high schools if you have them)? (check one)

☐ N/A the most current version is on the WSDOT website.
☐ Yes, they are on the school/school district website at:
☐ Yes, I have uploaded a copy(copies). [Upload the school district's walk route maps as part of this survey.](#)
☐ Yes, I will e-mail a copy(copies). SpilkeE@wsdot.wa.gov
☐ Yes, I will fax a copy(copies). Please Fax to: (360) 705-6822
☐ Yes, I will mail a copy(copies).
☐ Other, please explain.

If mailing, please send to:

**Safe Routes to School
WSDOT Local Programs
PO Box 47390
Olympia, WA 98504-7390**

4) When did you last update your school walk route plan?

5) Do you share the information about the school walk route plan with your city/county for inclusion in their capital planning efforts to improve conditions for children walking to school?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't Know

6) Who is the school district's primary contact for school walk route planning:

Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:

Please provide your contact information: Same as above. ☐

Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:

Comments:

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